Keeping in touch

News and notes from
the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches

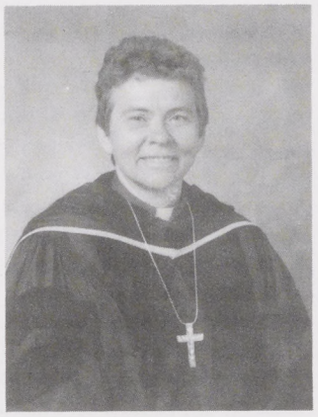
SEPTEMBER 1991

Rev. Pruitt Wins Rights for Military Lesbians and Gays

In a ruling with international impact, a federal appeals court said that the Army must reconsider its 1983 decision to dismiss Rev. Dusty Pruitt for being a lesbian.

The August 19 ruling said that the military must prove it has a "rational basis" for excluding gay men and lesbians from the armed forces. The court also said it would not accept homophobic prejudice within military ranks as a valid reason for the policy.

Rev. Pruitt is celebrating her 11th year as senior pastor of MCC Long Beach, CA, on Sept. 11. She served 13 years in the Army and reserves, training troops to defend against chemical and biological weapons. She was discharged as an Army Captain after revealing her lesbianism in a January 1983 interview with the *Los Angeles Times*. She sued in April 1983, contending that she had been improperly denied a promotion that was promised to her. Her legal battle has continued ever since, and was reported in the August 19 issue of *Time* magazine in an article on gays and lesbians in the military.



Rev. Dusty Pruitt

"The important thing about this ruling is that for the first time the military must justify by hard evidence that gay men and lesbians are a threat to the military," she said. "The arguments that the military uses to keep out gay men and lesbians are the same arguments they used against women and black men. Racism, misogyny and homophobia are three strands of the same rope that is used to keep people out of full participation in society."

Rev. Pruitt sees the court case as related to the Biblical cause of justice and righteousness. "If people see publicity about me, I want them to meet Jesus. If there's any glory, I want it to be the reflected glory of God," she said.

She has not yet decided what she will do if the Army does reinstate her. "Wouldn't it be fun to apply as an MCC chaplain?" she asked. If she does, she would be the first official MCC military chaplain. ❑

Exodus Meets An Immovable Force

TORONTO: Speaking on the opening day of the 16th annual Exodus International conference in Toronto June 24, Exodus president Joe Dallas told the 400 delegates "Never have we been under such criticism and attack."

He was referring to the efforts of MCC Toronto and 14 organizations comprising Toronto's gay and lesbian Christian network who mounted a massive publicity effort to counter the negative message that homosexuality is a learned behavior that can be cured. An MCC member told Canada's national newspaper "I don't know how you learn to be gay, except by listening to Bette Midler albums."

MCC Toronto played host to 300 at an evening interfaith service. Rev. Brent Hawkes asked the congregation to prepare for the television cameras and fewer than 30 chose to sit in the privacy area. It was the first time since Anita Bryant's 1978 visit to Toronto that cameras had been permitted in the church.

Rev. Hawkes read a letter from Rev. Dr. Bruce McLeod, chair of the Canadian Council of Churches, who wrote in his capacity as pastor of nearby Bellefair United Church: "A week before Pride Day we greet you as neighbors and fellow Christians. Your presence in our community is a symbolic reminder that gays and lesbians, like any other children of God's creation, can find fulfillment through Christ." It was a major statement of ecumenical witness.

Rev. McLeod called the Exodus conference "an affront. Bad enough that gays fear walking alone at night, it's worse to meet smiling evangelists suggesting if they were really Christian they'd be cured....It's not whether we're heterosexual or homosexual that matters finally. It's whether we are committed and responsible in our relationships," he wrote in a newspaper column later.

In a sermon entitled "Our People are Starving," Rev. Hawkes praised the gays and lesbians who had stayed within their churches to work for change, but he blasted the church universal for turning its back on a people "starving for God." He condemned what he called "selective fundamentalists" who used the Bible to judge and condemn. "Every week we have to put together the lives of people damaged by Exodus groups."

Once the site for next year's Exodus conference is known, MCC Toronto's media coordinator, Ian Taylor, will forward publicity materials to area MCC's to keep up the pressure. Taylor estimates UFMCC received thousands of dollars worth of free, positive media coverage in newspaper, radio and TV.

Later, at its Pride Day service, Toronto's first openly lesbian police commissioner, Laura Rowe, was MCC's guest speaker. The church received even more publicity. ❑

Fellowship Sunday is Oct. 6th

Fellowship Sunday, Oct. 6, marks the 23rd anniversary of the founding of UFMCC.

Every MCC church is asked to receive a special offering for the Benevolence Fund, which assists UFMCC pastoral leaders, Fellowship personnel and their immediate families in cases of catastrophic illnesses or situations.

"On October 6, 1968, I stepped out in faith when I conducted the first UFMCC worship service," said Rev. Elder Troy Perry. "Now every one of the 264 churches within UFMCC has the opportunity to step out in faith again by contributing to the Benevolence Fund that supports many UFMCC leaders in their times of greatest need as they face terminal illnesses."

Monies in the fund are dispersed at the sole discretion of the moderator, or in the moderator's absence, by the vice moderator and second vice moderator. The moderator has the authority to disperse funds from the Benevolence Fund to assist a qualified person in need in an amount not to exceed $500 for any single instance. The moderator may direct that up to $1,000 be paid from the fund to assist an indigent qualified person with his or her funeral expenses.

Checks should be made out to "UFMCC Benevolence Fund" and mailed to UFMCC at 5300 Santa Monica Blvd., Suite 304, Los Angeles, CA 90029 USA. ❑

Thank You For Your Support

From the Editorial Board

We are grateful to MCC-San Francisco for donating an IBM-compatible personal computer and printer to *Keeping in Touch* in August. The church is pastored by Rev. Jim Mitulski.

This equipment is enabling us to communicate more effectively and efficiently with the entire denomination.

We also want to express our thanks to everyone who made donations at General Conference toward purchase of additional computer hardware and software for the Fellowship offices. More than $700 was raised toward this important tool for ministry. Countless people also told us that they appreciate all the work that goes into *Keeping in Touch*. Words of encouragement are also essential to producing this newsletter, and we thank you for them.

Wish List

The Fellowship offices still need the following items to continue the process of fully updating and integrating our computer systems:

- ▼IBM-compatible personal computers AT 286 or 386, with at least 40mg hard drive.
- ▼VGA monitors.
- ▼Laser printers for use with IBM-compatibles. ❑

Praises

Rev. John Gill, pastor of **MCC of the Resurrection** in Houston, TX, celebrated 20 years of UFMCC ministry on Sept. 1.

Rev. Lew Broyles joined the pastoral staff of **Agape MCC** in Fort Worth, TX, Aug. 1. For the past three years, he pastored **MCC of Jackson**, MS.

Rev. Jim Lynch, pastor of **St. John the Apostle MCC** in Fort Myers, FL, was elected vice president of the Fort Myers Area Ministerial Association.

"Homosexuality: Not a Sin, Not a Sickness," a brochure by **Rev. Elder Don Eastman**, has gained special recognition in its Spanish translation. A major Mexican newspaper reprinted it side-by-side with the Pope's statement on homosexuality. The brochure has also been distributed at the Institudo Biblico de Buenos Aires in Brazil.

Rev. Evelyn Kinser, clergy on staff at **MCC Los Angeles**, and her spouse **Ms. Viva Kinser** express their thanks for the many prayers offered while Rev. Kinser underwent emergency hospitalization at General Conference. Rev. Kinser reports that she has recovered completely.

Rev. Renae Phillips, pastor of **MCC Lubbock**, TX, received an award from the Lubbock Lesbian/Gay Alliance at the Gay Pride Banquet.

In honor of Mexican Independence Day, Sept. 16, **ICM El Paso y Juarez** and **MCC in El Paso**, TX, are sponsoring "Fiesta Mexicana de am Biente," hosted by several local bars. Activities include a performance, bazaar and dance.

MCC Columbus, OH, held its first-ever "unity service" with other groups June 26. Ten groups participated, including Quakers, Evangelicals Concerned, Affirmation and Integrity. The service also raised money for AIDS Service Connection and Stonewall Union.

Open Arms MCC in Rochester, NY, celebrated its 10th anniversary on Aug. 18 with a special worship service and dinner.

Rev. Joe Whitley, pastor of **MCC Augusta**, GA, reports that his church made history in June by participating in Augusta's first Gay Pride March. "Although we were small in number (approximately 150), our voices were raised in unity and pride!" he said. ❑

Prayers

Rev. Frankye White, pastor of **St. Luke's MCC** in Jacksonville, FL, had successful gall bladder surgery Aug. 21, and was recuperating at home the next day. ❑

Keeping in Touch is a monthly publication of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. We are a church of the lesbian and gay community, open to all. Our mission is to call people to new life through the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, confront injustice through Christian social action, and create a community of healing and reconciliation.

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Send address changes, news and ideas to: *Keeping in Touch*, 5300 Santa Monica Blvd, #304, Los Angeles, CA 90029; (213) 464-5100.

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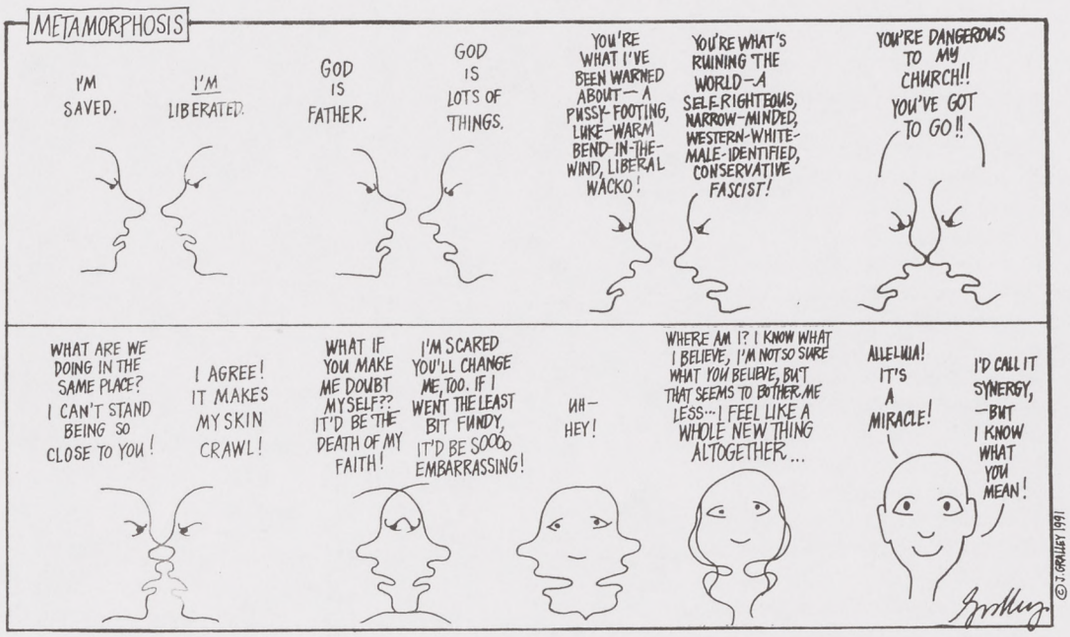
METAMORPHOSIS
I'M SAVED.
I'M LIBERATED.
GOD IS FATHER.
GOD IS LOTS OF THINGS.
YOU'RE WHAT I'VE BEEN WARNED ABOUT — A PUSSY-FOOTING, LUKE-WARM BEND-IN-THE-WIND, LIBERAL WACKO!
YOU'RE WHAT'S RUINING THE WORLD — A SELF-RIGHTEOUS, NARROW-MINDED, WESTERN-WHITE-MALE-IDENTIFIED, CONSERVATIVE FASCIST!
YOU'RE DANGEROUS TO MY CHURCH!! YOU'VE GOT TO GO!!
WHAT ARE WE DOING IN THE SAME PLACE? I CAN'T STAND BEING SO CLOSE TO YOU!
I AGREE! IT MAKES MY SKIN CRAWL!
WHAT IF YOU MAKE ME DOUBT MYSELF?? IT'D BE THE DEATH OF MY FAITH!
I'M SCARED YOU'LL CHANGE ME, TOO. IF I WENT THE LEAST BIT FUNDY, IT'D BE SOOOO EMBARRASSING!
UH— HEY!
WHERE AM I? I KNOW WHAT I BELIEVE, I'M NOT SO SURE WHAT YOU BELIEVE, BUT THAT SEEMS TO BOTHER ME LESS··· I FEEL LIKE A WHOLE NEW THING ALTOGETHER...
ALLELUIA! IT'S A MIRACLE!
I'D CALL IT SYNERGY, — BUT I KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN!
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Small Church Clergy Meet

A meeting of clergy from small churches is being organized by Rev. Cathy Elliott, pastor of Open Arms MCC in Rochester, NY.

"I want to identify people whose experience is similar to mine," she said. The purpose of this group is to meet and share resources and ideas.

Rev. Elliott is asking clergy from small churches to contact her if they meet the following criteria: Their church's average worship attendance is 20 to 50 people. They are part-time pastors with full-time secular jobs. Their church has experienced growth in the past year. They are concerned with developing pastoral skills for continued growth.

Anyone interested in this group may write to Rev. Elliott at Open Arms MCC, 243 Rosedale St., Rochester, NY 14620, or call (716) 271-8478. ❑

New Pastors Named

Congratulations to the following churches that have chosen new pastors:

Rev. Lisetta Thomas, becomes pastor of River City Living MCC in San Antonio, TX, Sept. 1. She served as pastoral leader of MCC Hudson Valley in Albany, NY, for eight months.

Rev. C. Buck was elected pastor of Victory Fellowship MCC in Shreveport, LA, on June 2. Rev. Buck has served as interim pastor there since July 1990. ❑

AIDS Self-Esteem Retreat Set

Diablo Valley AIDS Center, the AIDS ministry of Diablo Valley MCC in Concord, CA, received a $3,000 grant from the Junior League of Women of San Francisco for an AIDS Self-Esteem Retreat.

The cost of the retreat is $62.50 per person, and the grant will allow them to take 50 HIV-compromised people on the retreat free of charge.

The retreat will be held Nov. 1-3, 1991, at Point Bonita in the San Francisco Bay area, and there are still openings.

For more information, write to Mr. Woodie White, Northwest District AIDS Representative, Diablo Valley MCC, P.O. Box 139, Concord, CA 94522. ❑

Pastoral Search

MCC Pioneer in Denver, CO, has announced a pastoral vacancy. For info, write: Pastoral Search Committee, MCC Pioneer, P.O. Box 200580, Denver, CO 80220. ❑

Outreach in England

Manchester, England, became one of the newest MCCs, as their first Sunday worship service was attended by 26 people. The success of the meeting hold on June 30 will mean that regular services will be on the first Sunday monthly. ❑

Top 20 Tithes - July 1991

1.	MCC of Tucson, Tucson, AZ	US$5,061.30
2.	MCC Dallas, Dallas, TX	2,802.76
3.	Church/Holy Spirit MCC, Ft Lauderdale	2,069.05
4.	MCC of the Resurrection, Houston, TX	1,659.85
5.	MCC Long Beach, Long Beach, CA	1,584.14
6.	MCC San Francisco, SF, CA	1,524.50
7.	Christ Alive MCC, Vancouver, BC	CAN$1,246.49
8.	MCC Toronto, Toronto, Ontario	CAN$1,209.80
9.	River City MCC, Sacramento, CA	1,110.66
10.	King of Peace MCC, St. Petersburg, FL	1,071.14
11.	First MCC of Kansas, Wichita, KS	1,047.90
12.	MCC in the Valley, N Hollywood, CA	878.91
13.	Agape' MCC, Ft. Worth, TX	833.83
14.	MCC of the Rockies, Denver, CO	806.94
15.	St. Luke's MCC, Jacksonville, FL	768.91
16.	MCC Austin, Austin, TX	731.13
17.	Harvest MCC, Denton, TX	696.72
18.	Joy MCC, Orlando, FL	674.37
19.	MCC New York, NYC, NY	665.87
20.	Divine Redeemer MCC, Glendale, CA	660.42

(These figures reflect the 10 percent of each local church's income that is sent to Fellowship headquarters.)

Top 20 Per Capita - July 1991

1.	MCC of Tucson, Tucson, AZ	US$293.34
2.	Christ Alive MCC, Vancouver, BC	CAN$163.56
3.	Resurrection Chapel MCC, Torrence, CA	75.00
4.	MCC of the Rock, Little Rock, AR	54.68
5.	MCC Hamburg, Hamburg, Germany	DM 36.98
6.	Christ the King MCC, Oklahoma Cty, OK	35.51
7.	Divine Redeemer MCC, Glendale, CA	34.67
8.	MCC New Freedom/Christ, Houston, TX	34.51
9.	MCC of Boston, Boston, MA	29.96
10.	Open Arms MCC, Rochester, NY	29.15
11.	Whitewater Valley MCC, Richmond, IN	26.20
12.	MCC of Northern Virginia, Oakton, VA	25.90
13.	Morning Star MCC, Worcester, MA	24.17
14.	MCC Johnson County, Lenexa, KS	22.93
15.	Faith Eternal MCC, Springfield, IL	22.55
16.	River City MCC, Sacramento, CA	22.30
17.	MCC New York, NYC, NY	21.44
18.	New Covenant MCC, Walnut, CA	21.33
19.	MCC Louisville, Louisville, KY	20.99
20.	Redeemer MCC, Flint, MI	20.92

UFMCC has Strong Presence at Minnesota Seminary

Seven UFMCC students attend United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities in New Brighton, MN. All are affiliated with All God's Children MCC in Minneapolis.

This is the largest number of students from any local MCC congregation to attend a mainline seminary all at one time. More than 25 denominations send students to United Seminary, and UFMCC has the seventh largest number of students.

A recent visit there by Rev. Elder Troy Perry, founder of UFMCC, prompted United Seminary's president to tell him, "Having you here today is like having John Calvin visit. It's rare to have the founder of a denomination visit."

Elaine Thomas, student clergy at All God's Children MCC, submitted the following report about Rev. Perry's visit to her seminary.

All seven seminarians from All God's Children MCC gathered with UFMCC's founder. They are, from left to right, Ms. Meredith Kakach, Mr. David Regnaud, Mr. Stephen Harvey, Ms. Carmen Valenzuela, Rev. Elder Troy Perry, Rev. Nancy Horvath, Ms. Elaine Thomas, and Mr. Dexter Brecht.

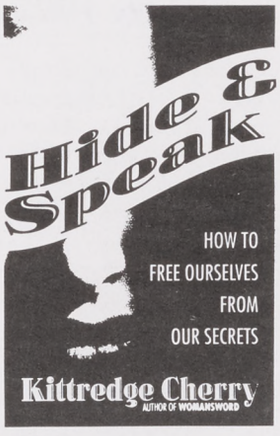
On Friday morning May 10, I paced nervously in the foyer of United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities where I am a student. Earlier my colleagues arrived at the seminary and were busy setting up the chapel for a UFMCC style worship service. Soon all seemed ready except the arrival of our guest of honor. Then the doors opened and I snapped to attention. "He's here!" I quickly relayed to the others and stepped forward to greet the founder of our denomination. "Reverend Perry," I said, "Welcome to United Theological Seminary." To my surprise my handshake was returned by a warm hug by the man I so admired. Following in quick succession were introductions and hugs by Rev. Perry who could not contain his delight at meeting the seven UFMCC seminarians from All God's Children MCC.

We led him to a nearby classroom where Rev. Perry and all seven seminarians quickly vested for the chapel service. After we prayed in preparation to worship, we gathered in the hallway and lined up to process into the chapel. Rev. Perry then turned to us and told us how very proud of us he was. His words fell as sweet music to our ears.

Piano music played by Rev. Ken Caton filled the halls with a joyous rendition of "Blessed Assurance." We processed into a room filled with the smiling faces of students and faculty of UTS, plus a group of supporters from All God's Children MCC of Minneapolis/St. Paul. The service was planned to give Rev. Elder Perry as much time as possible to preach.

As expected Rev. Perry delighted those in attendance with his Spirit filled style of preaching. A high point for me came when Rev. Perry pointed over the heads of his seminarians seated in the front row to the non-MCC gay or lesbian seminarians. He addressed them with authority and commissioned them to go out fearlessly, each to their own denominations and people to do the work which God had called them to. The service included a UFMCC style communion service and concluded with a benediction by Rev. Perry.

The worshippers were obviously moved by the service, many leaving with tears in their eyes. We received many heartfelt thanks for the service from people as they left the chapel. I told Rev. Perry how much his visit to our seminary meant to us, how difficult it was at times to be surrounded by students and faculty alike who did not take the UFMCC seriously. I told him some of our struggle as we claimed our identity not only as lesbian and gay Christians, but as persons who claimed the ministry and call of the UFMCC in a world of skeptics. "They don't believe we are for real," I told him. Rev. Perry laughed and said, "Well, after today they will!" ❑



Hide & Speak

How to Free Ourselves from Our Secrets

by Kittredge Cherry

This practical guide to the coming out process by Rev. Kittredge Cherry, editor of *Keeping in Touch* and UFMCC's Field Director for Ecumenical Witness and Ministry, is now available through UFMCC Church Services.

Published by HarperCollins (Retail Price: $16.95 {US}); 20% discount available through Church Services. Send a check for $13.55 per copy to UFMCC. {You will be billed for postage.}

President Bush Honors Group

A group founded by Good Samaritan Parish MCC in Toledo, OH, was honored recently by President George Bush as one of America's "thousand points of light."

NOVA Project, which provides services for people with AIDS and HIV infection, was named the 459th "Daily Point of Light" on May 18. It is the highest civilian honor bestowed by the president. Mr. Bush said the group "successfully addresses our most pressing social problems through direct and consequential acts of community service."

The six founders are Mr. Richard Dryer, Mr. Bruce Flowers, Ms. Gail Gorlen, Mr. Roger Snyder, Mr. Frank Swinehart and Rev. Paul Turner, pastor of the church.

Over the last four years, it has grown into an organization of 300 volunteers providing food, clothing, counseling, emergency housing and a buddy system to close to 150 clients.

Although NOVA is no longer longer officially affiliated with the church, Good Samaritan Parish MCC continues to provide food distribution, spiritual counseling and volunteers to NOVA.

"Our point of view is that we gave birth to a child that grew up and is now doing very well," Rev. Turner said. ❑